

September 30, 2003

Honorable Rita H. Inos
Commissioner of Education
CNMI Public School System
P.O. Box 501370CK
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Commissioner Inos:

We have determined that the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' (CNMI) application for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2003, under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C), can be approved subject to the special conditions specifically identified in the Department's September 22, 2003 letter to CNMI regarding the Single Audit Act (copy enclosed). Therefore, I am enclosing your State's Part C grant award.

The approval is based upon our receipt of your assurances for FFY 2003. This includes the assurance from the CMNI Public School System that the statewide system of early intervention services required by Part C and its implementing regulations is in effect.

This year, a number of States have either established systems of payments or are considering establishing or revising their systems of payments. Under 34 CFR §303.173(a), each State's Part C application must include the State's policies and procedures that identify: (1) how it will pay for early intervention services (under 34 CFR §303.520(a)); (2) any system of payments that the State chooses to establish (under 34 CFR §303.521(a)); and (3) all funding sources (under 34 CFR §303.522). Although a State is not required under Part C to access public and private insurance available to a family, if a State requires parents under Part C to access their public and/or private insurance, the State must include this information in its Part C application as well as an assurance, under 34 CFR §303.520(b)(3)(ii), that the inability of a parent to pay will not result in the denial of any service under Part C.

States must ensure that all of the functions and early intervention services under 34 CFR §303.521(b) are carried out at public expense (i.e., no cost to the family). Additionally, under 34 CFR §303.521(c), States that provide children with disabilities under age 3 with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under State law (i.e., birth-mandate States) must ensure that no fees are charged for the FAPE services provided to these children and their families. If a State has a system of payments under 34 CFR §303.521(a), any parent fees collected (for co-payments or other fees for services charged and received by the State's Part C program) are "program income" under 34 CFR §80.25. Program income is not included as part of total "State and local expenditures" for purposes of a State's meeting the non-supplanting requirements under Part C at 20 U.S.C. §1437(b)(5)(B) and 34 CFR §303.124.

The enclosed grant award for FFY 2003 is made with the continued understanding that this

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Office may, from time to time, require clarification of information within your application and appendices, if necessary. These inquiries are needed to allow us to appropriately carry out our administrative responsibilities related to Part C.

We appreciate your ongoing commitment to the provision of quality early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

Sincerely,

/s/Patricia J. Guard for

Stephanie Smith Lee
Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosure

cc: Suzanne Lizama
Part C Coordinator